

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

Sub A1 1. A network-based parts distribution system comprising:
 a plurality of buyer computers [for operation by a system participant
 desiring to obtain one or more parts;]
 a plurality of seller computers [for operation by a system participant
 desiring to sell one or more parts;] and
 at least one server computer, wherein said buyer computers, said seller
 computers and said server computer are interconnected as a computer network, said
 server computer being programmed to receive part related data from said seller
 computers and use said data to maintain a database of all available parts and to receive
 part requests from said buyer computers and select one or more parts from said
 database in response to said requests.

2. The parts distribution system of claim 1 wherein said server
 computer selects parts according to a buyer-specific picking order.

3. The parts distribution system of claim 1 wherein said server
 computer relays a purchase order issued by one of said buyer computers to an
 appropriate one of said seller computers.

4. The parts distribution system of claim 1 wherein said parts in
 said database *are* sorted into a plurality of inventory categories.

5. The parts distribution system of claim 4 wherein each one of
 said inventory categories is further sorted into an plurality of sub-inventory categories.

6. The parts distribution system of claim 1 wherein said computer
 network is the Internet.

Sub A2 7. A method of distributing parts, said method comprising the
 steps of:

providing a plurality of buyer computers [for operation by a system participant desiring to obtain one or more parts;

providing a plurality of seller computers [for operation by a system participant desiring to sell one or more parts;]

providing at least one server computer, wherein said buyer computers, said seller computers and said server computer are interconnected as a computer network;

using said seller computers to input part related data to said server computer;

using said data to maintain a database of all available parts;

using said buyer computers to transmit part requests to said server computer; and

selecting one or more parts from said database in response to said requests.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein said step of selecting one or more parts from said database includes selecting parts according to a buyer-specific picking order.

9. The method of claim 7 further comprising the step of using said server computer to relay a purchase order issued by one of said buyer computers to an appropriate one of said seller computers.

10. The method of claim 7 wherein said step of maintaining said database includes sorting said parts in said database into a plurality of inventory categories.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein each one of said inventory categories is further sorted into an plurality of sub-inventory categories.

12. The method of claim 7 wherein said computer network is the Internet.